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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses an ongoing study being conducted at Brigham Young University (BYU) in Utah concerning ways of improving communication teaching to graduate students, especially those in the business administration program. The paper also discusses some current research on language and management and some preliminary results of fourth year data. The research involves the MBA (Master of Business Administration) classroom in which bilingual (foreign national) students (abundant at BYU) are divided into study groups formed around languages, and periodically give 3-minute presentations, one in English and the second in their native language. Listeners fill out evaluation forms and presenters complete presenter forms. The purpose of the program is two-fold: (1) the North Americans can help foreign nationals with the English language, and (2) the foreign nationals can supply business terms in the foreign language. The program is centered around the concept of the Competing Values Framework management approach in international business. This approach requires a knowledge of cultures and a use of language that goes deeper than merely the basics of business. It is noted that multinational firms need to be more aware of cultural miscommunications, particularly if their business involves personnel management and marketing in foreign countries. The communication program at BYU helps to begin this awareness development at the classroom level. The evaluator form is appended. Contains 3 references. (GLR)

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Solidifying International Bridges Through Communication Teaching

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Solidifying International Bridges Through Communication Teaching

INTRODUCTION--TEACHING HOW TO BUILD

An international lecturer to MBA faculty at Brigham Young University a few years ago made the haunting statement, "If we are preparing managers to manage only Americans we are preparing for a world which no longer exists." As a teacher of communication I want students prepared for a world which does exist. An ongoing study at Brigham Young University (BYU) looks at ways to improve communication teaching to graduate students--especially MBA's. The first year of the study (1988) pinpointed the first two concepts (a) audience analysis, and (b) presentation organization. The second year of the study (1989) reinforced those two concepts and added at least two others (a) self confidence, and (b) idea simplification. The third year of the study (1990) looked at differences between Spanish speakers depending on which country they lived in when they learned their Spanish. We were unable to reach significant conclusions based on the collected data, but increased our library of original videotaped presentations we are studying. The fourth year of the study (1991) has been completed and the data is being analyzed.

This paper will discuss how the study is being conducted, some current research on international communication, and some preliminary results of fourth year data.

HOW THE STUDY IS CONDUCTED

BYU is a significant location for this study. International communication is common at Brigham Young University. Most students have completed voluntary missionary service for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints--the sponsoring institution of BYU. As a result, fluency in foreign languages is common. In addition, many non-American students choose to study at BYU. They approach graduate work with English as their **second** language.

In January of 1988 I began a study of business presentations by graduate students who are fluent in English and at least one other language. I wanted to know if there are teachable skills in working with business in two languages. Since the onset of the study four years ago, we have initiated a new policy in the MBA classroom which has shifted my focus a little. Eighty per cent of our MBA students speak second languages. Twenty per cent of our entering class were international students. In our carefully controlled entering class of one hundred students this year, we divided them into an Asian section and a

European section. Within each section study groups were formed around languages. In all but two study groups each foreign language had three or four North Americans with a foreign national from the same language. Our purpose was two-fold (a) the North Americans can help the foreign nationals with the language, and (b) the foreign nationals can supply business terms in the foreign language. Business terms at the management level have typically not entered into the vocabulary of the missionary serving in another language and culture. The concept I have changed to is how we can prepare students not only to work in other cultures, but how to **manage** in other cultures.

The Classroom Provided the Method of Study

In a graduate MBA class of oral presentations I ask for volunteers to give the same 3-minute presentation they are preparing on a business topic in whatever second language they knew. I also asked for volunteers who spoke those second languages to come to listen and to critique. Response was excellent. Eleven presenters emerged the first year, 34 presenters emerged the second year, 31 the third year, and 40 the fourth year. So far we have looked at speakers of 18 different languages.

First we videotape each presentation in English. The students then come to the taping lab on another day and we videotape their "other language" presentation. Listeners fill out Evaluator Forms (see Appendix

A) as they observe the presenters. At the conclusion of each presentation the presenter fills out a Presenter Form (similar to Evaluator Form, Appendix A). During this fourth year of study we have had most Presenters also fill out Presenter Forms on their English presentations so we can compare that data.

CURRENT LITERATURE COMBINES NEED FOR LANGUAGE AND MANAGEMENT

Three publications and a method of study explored in two of them have recently intrigued me. Two are management books, and one is an international business book. Robert E. Quinn in the 1988 publication, *Beyond Rational Management*, introduces the Competing Values Model as applied to management. Quinn and his colleagues, Sue R. Faerman, Michael P. Thompson, and Michael R. McGrath further explore the Competing Values Model in the 1990 publication *Becoming a Master Manager*. The 1991 publication of the third edition of *The Cultural Environment of International Business* by Vern Terpstra and Kenneth David explores ideas relating to international business.

Quinn looks at the evolution of management models. "In running large organizations, there is no one way to manage effectively. Master managers understand this and develop the capacity to use several contradictory logics simultaneously" (Quinn, p. xiv). The contradictory

logics are developed by Quinn and his colleagues into a Competing Values Framework, or model which is illustrated below.

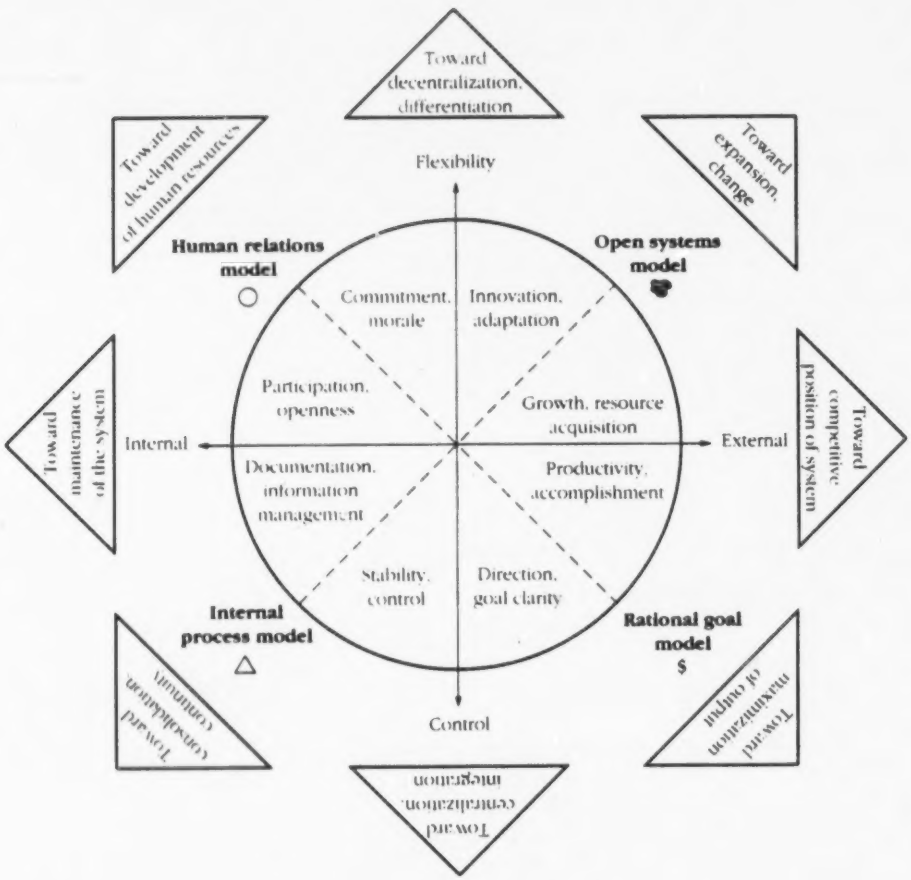

Figure 1. Eight General Value Orientations in the Competing Values Framework

Quinn explains that the Master Manager develops an ability to work in all areas of the framework to some degree. This ability to work in

all areas allows the Master Manager to adjust to the times and demands in a situation. Quinn quotes Torbert "Most forms of professional knowledge result in conditional confidence--confidence that you will act well so long as the situation does not violate your assumptions about it. The active, awakening attention described here results in unconditional confidence--confidence that you can meet any situation that arises because you are capable of discarding inaccurate assumptions and ineffective strategies in the midst of ongoing action" (Quinn, p. 168).

With this management idea of a Competing Values Framework in mind we began to look at management in international presentation situations. Terpstra indicates "Your job is to get beyond the frontstage culture and approach the backstage culture of the country with which you are dealing. Frontstage culture includes the standard, normal, proper ways of doing things that insiders are willing to share with outsiders. . . . Backstage culture refers to knowledge that insiders define as standard ways of doing things that they are not willing to share with outsiders" (Terpstra, David, p. 9-10).

Here is where our study may contribute significantly. The young people we have included in our study have learned their other languages not only from books or classrooms, but from being with the people in their homes, their schools, their families, and their daily lives. As a result they approach the language and culture much as a child

does. They learn to speak and do from the approved behavior of others around them. "Cultural briefing can never teach you everything you need to know. Proper training, however, can help you to be cosmopolitan--that is, to know how to learn what you need to know about a foreign cultural environment" (Terpstra, David, p. 5). The complexities of learning how to learn in another culture are obviously as varied as the many cultures themselves. However, these complexities can be better approached by also realizing that "Problems of cultural miscommunication stem from the fact that persons in any business firm are triply socialized: into their national culture, into their business culture, and into their corporate culture" (Terpstra, David, p. 11).

"Multinational firms are far more proficient at managing the more technical and quantifiable tasks such as accounting, finance, manufacturing and logistics than they are at managing more culturally sensitive tasks such as personnel management and marketing" (Terpstra, David, p.16). If these people-to-people tasks are the most difficult then communication concepts can be a way to improve people-to-people understanding. By looking at the individuals in our study we can evaluate what choices they make to increase communication in presentations. "The firm may hire skilled translators for its foreign operations. It is unlikely that its managers have either the time or the expertise to be translators, except informally. Company translators can

best deal with the firm's written communications with its various contacts. They are of less help in oral communication" (Terpstra, David, p. 39).

So, to look at management concepts and international communication concepts together we use a Reader's Document Review form (see Appendix B) developed by Quinn et al. We apply it to the oral presentations in both English and the second language.

Competing Values Model Applied to Oral Communication

We are currently applying the Competing Values Model concepts as listed on the Reader's Document Review form (see Appendix B) and analyzing the data revealed. The next three weeks will enable us to complete initial analysis and then we will be able to present that information at the EMU World Conference in April.

References

Quinn, Robert E. (1988). *Beyond Rational Management.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Quinn, Robert E., Faerman, Sue R., Thompson, Michael P., & McGrath, Michael R. (1990). *Becoming a Master Manager.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Terpstra, Vern, & David, Kenneth. (1991). *The Cultural Environment of International Business.* Cincinnati: South-Western Publishing Co.

APPENDIX A

EVALUATOR FORM
Cross-Cultural Oral Presentation Evaluation

Evaluator:
Native of:
Association with Presenting Language/Country:
Mission Yes[ ] No[ ]
Business Yes[ ] No[ ]
Study Abroad Yes[ ] No[ ]
Other_____

Presenter:
Presenting Language/Country:
Topic:
Live Presentation [ ] or Video [ ]
Date:

How long did/have you live(d) there?_____
How long has it been since you have lived/been there?_____
What region of the country were/are you in?_____

What do you think the presenter s objective was in giving this presentation? Do you feel that he/she accomplished this objective? Explain.

How satisfied were you with this presentation? Circle the appropriate indicator and explain.

Very Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Slightly Dissatisfied Slightly Satisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied

Circle the language in which you felt the most satisfied with the presentation. Explain.

English _____

List the number of times you were confused during the presentation. Explain.

Were you adversely affected at some point in the presentation? Yes [ ] No [ ]
If you answered yes, circle the degree to which you were affected and then explain.

slightly turned off turned off slightly alienated alienated slightly offended offended

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While referring to the applicable **CULTURGRAM** describe the presenter's performance in the following areas:

Circle aspects that are excellent
√ aspects that need improvement
Comment on aspects with a Circle or √
Add additional aspects that apply to this language and culture
Indicate the overall rating for each major area (Content, Verbal, Paraverbal, Nonverbal, Style)

	High										Low
CONTENT	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Comment on the following:											
Accurate											
Complete											
Concrete											
Relevant											
Logical											
Understandable											

VERBAL	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Comment on the following:											
Morphology											
Syntax											
Lexicon											
Phonology											

PARAVERBAL	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Comment on the following:											
Pitch											
Tone											
Rate											
Volume											
Stress											
Inflection											

NONVERBAL	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Comment on the following:											
Eye Contact											
Gestures											
Grooming											
Posture											

STYLE	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Comment on the following:											
Diction											
Grammar											
Polish											

OTHER CULTURE SPECIFIC AREAS

APPENDIX B

Reader's Initials _____

READER'S DOCUMENT REVIEW

Writer's Name _____

DESCRIPTION: What is this document?
Using the 7-point scale, indicate to what extent each set of adjectives describes the document.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not At All Describes			Somewhat Describes			Very Much Describes

_____ Aware, Discerning, Perceptive

_____ Technically Correct, Accurate

_____ Insightful, Mind Stretching, Visionary

_____ Rigorous, Precise, Controlled

_____ Interesting, Stimulating, Engaging

_____ Conclusive, Decisive, Action Oriented

_____ Practical, Realistic, Informative

_____ Focused, Logical, Organized

_____ Innovative, Creative, Original

_____ Emphatic, Forceful, Powerful

_____ Credible, Believable, Plausible

_____ Open, Candid, Honest

EVALUATION: How effective is this document?
Using the 7-point scale, rate the overall effectiveness of this document. Circle your response.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Somewhat Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Very Effective